



College Green Submission

May 2016

Executive Summary

- The advent of the Luas Cross City in 2017 will bring major changes to Dublin city. The city's central spine which will now be used by Luas, has for many years been used for all forms of transport through the city. This will necessitate changes to all other modes of transport.
- The key consideration for DublinTown & its members is for customers to be able to have reasonable access to the city. This is particularly the important for access to both car parks and hotels. We also emphasise the need to differentiate between commuter traffic which occurs at peak times and customer traffic which tends to occur off peak. These are different in their nature and composition and require different policy responses.
- A significant piece of consumer research and economic analysis has been commissioned by the National Transport Authority. The outcome of this important work will be considered carefully by the Dublin Town and its members and we intend to further contribute to the discussion at that time.
- DublinTown welcomes the development of a Plaza on College Green. We urge careful consideration of its use and advocate a flexible approach that will facilitate its use for events and activities. Therefore, we would oppose its use for casual trading or the placement of permanent street furniture in the location.
- We believe that it is important for tour buses to stop at the new bus stops opposite Trinity College.
- Given the limited road space available to us we need to utilise it carefully to achieve the maximum social and economic benefits. We strongly believe that given Dublin's size and complexity that future transport infrastructure be accommodate underground. DART Underground and Metro North must be commenced immediately.
- We accept that the routing of the Luas will give rise to displacement of other vehicles. In this context buses which currently make east west movements through College Green and Dame Street, will now be accommodated on the Quays. This gives rise to a need for additional bus priorities such as the introduction of a second bus lane on the south quays. We understand the need for this during the peak periods of 7-10am and 4-7pm, Monday to Friday, but would request that this lane be available to other vehicles outside of those peak periods.
- Motorists who do not need to be in the city centre should be encouraged and facilitated in finding alternative routes. In this context, we believe that the East Link Bridge should be made

a non-toll bridge and that left hand turns onto the Samuel Becket Bridge should be accommodated.

- In order to limit the number of north-south vehicle movements we suggest that people with valid parking tickets should be allowed use the Luas free of charge between Parnell Street and Stephen's Green, thus encouraging them not to traverse the city by car.
- We look forward to considering the full list of proposed bus route changes and considering how this fits with Network Direct.

Introduction

The advent of the Luas Cross City in 2017 will bring major changes to Dublin city. Cross city movements will be greatly facilitated by the new line which will run through the city's central spine. Dublin will also have the long overdue integration of the Luas Green and Red lines. Creating greater interconnectivity and transfer between transport modes is something that the business community has long demanded. The expression of this integration through Luas Cross City is a particularly welcome development.

The city's central spine which will now be used by Luas, has for many years been used for all forms of transport through the city. Ever since the days of the Wide Streets Commission the city's core of O'Connell Street, Westmoreland Street and College Green has been the main channel through which movement in the city was accommodated. This space will now be occupied by Luas and therefore will not be available for previous uses. Therefore, it is accepted that there will be consequences for other transport modes. Similarly given the investment made by the city in Luas it makes sense that it is allowed travel unhindered through the city. Therefore, we will have to consider alternative routes for east-west traffic to ensure that conflicts across the line are avoided.

All forms of transport from buses to cars and pedestrians to cyclists will see changes in the routes available to them. It is these necessary realignments of all transport modes that we consider in our submission. While we understand their requirement, the business community is most anxious to ensure that customers are not persuaded to take their custom elsewhere. Therefore, we must consider the road space that is available to us and we must allocate it to maximum effect. It is critically important that all transport users have the most logical and efficient routes available to them.

DublinTown has actively engaged with Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority in relation to the proposed transport and access changes including the use of College Green. We have contributed to the research and economic analysis that has been commissioned by the NTA & DCC. At the time of writing the results of these important pieces of work was not available to us. When it is available we will give it careful consideration and will present our informed views to the relevant bodies.

It has been our experience that our views and those of our colleagues in the business community have been carefully considered and plans have been altered and upgraded to best accommodate the sometimes competing needs of the business community and other stakeholders. DublinTown is pleased to see that it is proposed to allow both buses and taxis travel on the Luas track around Trinity College. Similarly, we are pleased to see the relaxation of the proposed bus gate on the south quays and the repositioning of the bus gate on the north quays. We view these as sensible accommodation measures that will greatly improve accessibility throughout the city.

The development of the College Green Plaza

The welcome development of the College Green Plaza has almost come as a by-product of the changes in traffic movement necessitated by the Luas Cross City. The creation of a plaza is nonetheless a very welcome addition to Dublin City Centre. Such a plaza and event space in the city will provide a natural home for events and activities within the city. It is our view that the space should be maintained for this use and therefore, the business community would be opposed to the creation of casual trading pitches or permanent street furniture which would undermine its potential as a flexible entertainment & event space. It is important that any further proposals about the design and use of this area be discussed with relevant businesses and we look forward to engaging in this process.

It is noted that there will be a bus stop opposite Trinity College. Trinity College is a destination that is often visited by tourists. With such a high tourist demand for this area, we believe it to be important that tour buses have a set-down and pick-up area to allow passengers alight and embark at this location.

Maintain access for car parks and hotels

DublinTown has maintained a key policy position of supporting investment in, and development of the city's public transport infrastructure. It is our considered view that increased use of public transport is the only way that we can maintain adequate movement within the city centre and avoid traffic gridlock particularly at peak times. However, we also recognise that as research conducted by Millward Brown on behalf of the NTA demonstrates, 19% of the city's customer base access the city centre by car and that these customers contribute 31% of the total spend. Some businesses, for example department stores and luxury retailers are disproportionately reliant on the spend from the car borne shopper. Therefore, a primary concern for DublinTown and its members is to maintain logical and efficient access by car to both the city's car parks and hotels. It is further recognised that we need to manage the demands placed upon the city's road space. Businesses are concerned that roads which are already congested will be asked to take additional traffic volumes. In the absence of detailed traffic modelling, it has not proven possible for us to fully consider how this is likely to progress in practice. However, it would be our view that we may have to carefully manage demand and this may entail persuading motorists who do not contribute socially or economically to consider alternative routes and/or modes of transport.

In that context we need to develop a long term sustainable model for deliveries within the city centre area. Such models have been developed in other large cities and it is our view that Dublin is now sufficiently large and complex for us to consider how we manage deliveries to ensure that our stores are stocked and our customers can have reasonable access to us at their time of choice.

Demand Management of Road Space

The key learning from this process is the space above ground within Dublin City is finite and that we are trying to accommodate too many conflicting demands with too limited a capacity. We have to consider how we manage the volumes of traffic within the city and we must prioritise those vehicles most required by the city socially, environmentally and economically. This gives rise to a number of considerations.

Dublin city continues to grow in size and has the potential to become a significant European city in which case it will grow at a significantly greater pace. The reality is that if Dublin does not progress it will in all likelihood go into decline. Obviously, it is crucial for Ireland's economic success that the city continue to grow and develop. This will give rise to further demands on the road-space that is already limited. Therefore, it is the strong contention of Dublin Town that future transport proposals for the city must be accommodated underground. DublinTown is calling for the immediate progressing of

both DART Underground and Metro North. Dublin cannot wait for 10 to 15 years for the completion of these projects. We simply cannot fit more infrastructure above ground. The business community will oppose temporary and non-sustainable projects such as Bus Rapid Transit. Dublin is large enough to warrant an underground system to move passengers efficiently through the city.

In this context it is also worth considering the differing needs of both customers and commuters. Commuters travel during rush hour, customers tend to travel off peak. Therefore, we can develop time dependent responses that recognise these differing travel patterns. DublinTown would support efforts to further encourage commuters to use the public transport options available to them. A practical example of this applies in the case of the proposed bus priority on the South Quays. We understand that with College Green being unavailable for east west traffic that a proportion of routes will have to be re-routed onto the Quays. DublinTown accepts that this gives rise to the need for a second bus lane to be introduced during peak times. However, outside of the peak period we are of the view that the second lane be available to all traffic. Therefore, we propose that one lane be permanently bus only and that the second lane be bus only between 7 and 10 am and between 4 and 7pm, Monday to Friday. This would facilitate easier passage through the city for customers during off peak times. DublinTown members consider the differentiation between peak commuter traffic and off peak customer traffic to be essential in understanding traffic patterns within the city.

It is important to manage loading bays and other vehicle parking. There is some evidence of delivery vehicles staying in loading bays for long periods, thus blocking access for other delivery vehicles who are then required to circle the area to find alternative locations. This requires an appropriate enforcement regime.

We are also acutely aware of the need to ensure that motorists who do not need to be in the city centre are given options that allow them to get to their destination without having to use the already clogged routes. A number of alterations to traffic routes would assist in this regard. For example, motorists coming into the city from the direction of the Port tunnel along the north quays should be allowed to turn left onto the Samuel Beckett Bridge. This would assist a number of motorists in turning away from the city before reaching the already congested quays at the Customs House. Similarly, were the toll was lifted from the East Link Bridge a large number of motorists would be facilitated in skirting around the edge of the city and avoiding the most congested part of the city. While the City Council would lose an estimated €4m per annum in tolls from this bridge, the city would reap a larger economic benefit.

Australian cities such as Melbourne and Adelaide avoid cross city traffic by allowing free use of their tram systems within the core city centres. We would advocate a similar system in Dublin. In order to reduce traffic volumes we would advocate that motorists who have a valid parking ticket would be allowed use the Luas within the district between Stephen's Green and Parnell Street free of charge. This would assist in ensuring that north side residents who wish to shop on the south side of the city would not be required to drive across the city and vice versa.

To further limit demand within the city centre we would advocate a use of a levy on private car parking spaces. Such a scheme was successfully introduced in Nottingham, where the fees levied were used to enhance public transport and cycling infrastructure. We believe that such a scheme should be introduced over the Greater Dublin Area to encourage a greater transfer to public and sustainable transport modes. In Nottingham the levy is charged to the employer who can seek recoupment from employees. We further believe that such a levy should be charged on parking spaces in out of town retail parks and similar car parking spaces available to members of the public.

Use of Technology and Signage

The changes required to accommodate Luas Cross City will mean less space available for other forms of transport. This necessitates alternative movements for both cars and buses. The reality is that people using buses and those who wish to drive will experience less direct routes. Bus passengers may find that they are alighting further from their final destination while car drivers will now be required to make detours before arriving at their destination of choice. It is essential that we educate the public through advertising, websites, social media and publications as to how they can get to their destination of choice. While the journey may take longer, if there is certainty and understanding amongst the travelling public about the new routes we may limit the negative impacts. DublinTown has developed an app which uses google maps to assist motorists finding their car park of choice. The app would also allow Dublin City Council alert motorists to road works and disruptions. DublinTown would be happy to make this app available to DCC & NTA so we can collectively work together to inform the public of the new arrangements. We would also be very happy to promote pedestrian routes through the city and work with Dublin Bus to help passengers locate their buses. It is important to upgrade wayfinding signage to ensure that the public is provided with a clear set of signs to guide them to their destination.

With proposed changes to the direction of Trinity Street and Church Lane, there is an opportunity to upgrade the public domain and surrounding streets in line with the installation of the civic plaza

Finally, it goes without saying that it is imperative that both businesses and the general public are kept informed of future developments relating to traffic changes and plans and that we all work together to enhance the overall accessibility to and enjoyment of the city centre.

Bus routing

Businesses have expressed some concern at the lack of clarity surrounding aspects of the plans. Clarity is sought on how already congested roads can accommodate the increased demands that will be placed upon them and also the extent of re-routing of buses that we can expect and how this will work in the context of network direct. We would also like greater clarity on where it is proposed to place bus stops.

It has been suggested that right hand turns onto Parliament Street may be difficult. We seek clarification if simultaneous right hand turns onto Parliament Street and left hand turns from Parliament Street onto Dame Street have been undertaken and how these have progressed. We would suggest that where issues arise given the limited space available at this junction that greater use of Wine Tavern Street is considered for this purpose.

Where Wine Tavern Street is used we would suggest general two- way traffic on Parliament Street to enable access and egress to and from the city centre.

Given the proposed increased use of Fishamble Street we would strongly advocate that on-street parking on this street be prohibited.

Economic Impact Statement

DublinTown welcomes the fact that the NTA & DCC have commissioned research into the economic implications of the proposed changes. However, given the tight timescale we have not had the opportunity to consider the findings of this work before responding to this call for submissions. Obviously, serious consideration will have to be given to this study and the economic implications of the proposals.

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